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Bard

= = = = =

Angels tell us to stay home—
thongsick airports all flights nixed
a sign from gods to live at home
the age of travel is over
throw out your glossy magazines, buy
a plastic palm tree and hope for weather.

It's over. It's really over.
Stopping foreign travel will stop foreign wars.
War is just vicarious travel
send our children to suffer in weird places

εἶμι is not a verb that means to spend,
it means to go. It also means to be.
Depending on where you lay the stress,

where you put your money. Be.
Be in the world where you can be on foot,
or maybe a little car, they're part
of our bodies by now, Stay. Stand. Sit.

No conveyances. Being, not Boeing.
No spaceship to Cancun.

1 January 2011

Timid dabs of new beginning
saffron sanctifies mugwort lames
we are unborn

*

their children skate
over trolley tracks a clatter
steel on steel
their grown-ups dangle
from a meager memory or two
shadow of a sound

*

or afterwards, when the smoke was gone
and only the cough was left
they sat on the steps of the library
he had to blush his way through them
even there they were waiting
fearsome, the others.

*

nothing in mind

no rimes with now

the sharp pencil dreams

lost redhead on Arapahoe

too neurotic even for me

then I remember how much I forget

*

And be free of all that

as if it were another person

my life happened to

with me out of town for the occasion

*

for the duration

they said, never adding 'of the war'

just the latin word

saying we'd last as long as it does

whatever it was, the unspoken,

until it ends

this door is closed this wood can't be had.

No cinnamon. No sugar. No garden rakes.

*

But what did it do
and who was me,
a whingeing toddler
awkwardly lodged
in always hungry flesh—
how did Job know
they knew a manchild
had been conceived?
is that one more animal
cunning lost in our travels,
does the sow itemize already
the census of her farrow?

*

but that leads to a door
and a door needs a wall
and the wall is what you'll never
because no honest sentence ends

*

a fleck of rain left from the night
sing me something
trickle of sense through time
trickle of sunshine through the trees

do I need to tell you everything?

what god would not pity us

and let down for us to use

a rosary of his tears?

2 January 2011

= = = = =

(My father's gold-capped Parker pen
the only one)

ratchet platen
telegrapher's roll poolshark's blue
all that, all that

I never knew how to do anything

all those years reading and no writing!
what a Paradise.

Then writing down
one day on soft
yellow paper an image from my mind
snaked me out of Eden.

Spool ribbon back-space key.

2 January 2011

= = = = =

after WBY

Look on me and see if I do well

importunate energy

seeks masculine form

even when there's no more than this

it can *still break stone*.

2 January 2011

Or where (late) the sun sign

(call it Capricorn) plays across your face

—by bone I bear you

and your philtrum, darling,

is Scandinavia—

an arrow in your armor stuck.

It was a war

there were northmen and local kerls,

there were churls.

The church!

the church made

music out of bearskin,

the Mass of Mistletoe

where god is a toxic white berry under which we stand

to die of kisses,

viscous sap, *Viscum album*

glistens on the skin,

mistletoe is as high into the sky as earth can climb.

Skyey ailment. Zenith fever. Allergy of clouds.

2 January 2011

MOSS

1.

a little mound of it
in the house, a mass
of springtime to celebrate
on the windowsill
against reverently the snow.

2.

Permission needs me,
Green things to decide.
And it all was!
(I never met a stranger.)

3.

So thinking of you after all.
The fewer stars you can see
the more important each of them is.
With clouded skies, my eyes, the weather
I haven't seen the Milky Way in years—
those myriads don't mean me now
but Arcturus does. And Rigel does.
And Polaris in high summer
when I am islanded
points out the way to America,

the true America,
the one that is always north,
north of any me.

4.

Is that an invitation?
Come with me to your skin.
To an intelligence like yours?
Come to me bare-chested
against the insolent silence
the Indians left us with,

we took their land
they took our voices?

Left us with our lingo
that does not fit this land.

Now fish them back for us,
be *rebekah*, a hook
to pull the stars down from the sky sea

give us our voices back

the hidden star
Cassiopeia holds in her lap
easy as a house cat slumbering

but who knows what
when a star wakes?

5.

So the moss is soft
and seems to live easy

a little light a little water
it looks healthy when I touch it

gently, how else
touch a silent person?

6.

Maybe moss waiting
will give us our words back
Americans or for the first time

silenced by what we did to them.
Abnaki. Wampanoag. Lenape.

And they had their kabbalah too,
how to receive
the letters
the sky speaks
star by cloud,

stripteasing, concealing,

the book of splendor
writ on such dark pages

can you read?
I brought you with me to read them to me
since all this stuff is written in your native language

snow on the hillside
somebody's old lawn-roller rusting away for fifty years

—it's not just there
it's there because
somebody left it there
but who and we'll
never know why,

things mean us
so shallow
in the world

the gardener dies
his rake leans on the fence
green and capable

we need to know

who left it here,
this everything we have.

7.

Or are we lost right away
as soon as we tumble out of the saddle
sprawl among lizards
drunk on the sight of Joshua trees
boulders that skim along the sand at night
death by folklore
and a silver spur
prodding your flank?

Wait for me there
the sand is warm still
I'll be there with the 4x4
before the cold moon speaks

8.

I thought you of all people would
understand this stuff,
the windshield wiper
that clears the sky,
the fake rabbinic quaver of the wind
yearning through rocks,

but you're just as big a tenderfoot as I am
can't tell ghimel from noon
can't tell ideographs from cracks in the cup
the pottery the tortoise shell

everything is writing
but not everything is written

we still have a chance
suck on our skins for breakfast
and with twigs you yanked
out of the campfire last night
write charcoal canticles on the sandstone cliff

smile back over your shoulder
and tell me what to do

pronounce the world
one syllable per thing
till I answer you back

then we sit side by side and read what we have written.

9.

This is what the moss made
happen in the man's head.
A small cast of characters

from a Soho playhouse
rode out on virtual horses
into the high desert you enter
between the words of any book
but *strait is the gate* and hard to find
unless the decent writer has
gone and let light in between the words,
big spaces on the creamy page,
a scatter of words

of stars
and we find our way—
we can ride through three abreast
you and me and that other agency
the one who hasn't said so yet—

I think it might really be your shadow
but I can't tell, like the old song says
I only have eyes for you.

so it had to be somewhere
aqua fingers
diamond ears
amethyst in shade
everything is there for us to hear

From the horses' point of view
we are passengers,
from our own we are explorers

There, sit
firmly on that rock
be as quiet as moss
and stick to the stone
and try to keep it from moving

No can do.
It runs past you—
there's nothing there

that's what the rabbi meant—
you can't point to the word
with your own finger,

you need a little silver hand
on a long brass handle
to point the true word out
the one you need to say,
now, loud, chant,
quaver.

Every book is holy.
Every word you speak is true.

3 January 2011

= = = = =

Caught anything by listening
Only as if a smaller animal altogether
broke wet passage into a green
thing around the edges of a once

the petal fell then and rocked
a table, the wood became memory
and spoke—daybed and Alp—
the afternoon was all climbing
some men can just do it others
the inside felt just like the out

Canterbury bells they call those and those
rosemary many you taste alongside fish
they give essences to things
the people we call colors talk

and that is all that heaven says
stickle burr gospels and glue shoes
we need what matters shiny clothes
casement windows brisk dusty souls

Miser me she said and I was willing
the birds' morse code that we forgot
detach the memory lime tree socket
beautiful business of being far.

4 January 2011